



Third Sunday of Easter April 18, 2010 C

ALIVE IN CHRIST CAMPAIGN EARTH DAY A GOOD STORY FOR PARENT WITH TEENS

Some of you are aware of the *Alive in Christ Capital Campaign* that has been taking place all over our diocese for the past two years. Most of you may not have heard of the campaign.

The *Alive in Christ Capital Campaign* grew out of the Diocesan Synod which took place four years ago in our diocese. Bishop Wenski called the Synod as a way to listen to the concerns of the people of our diocese. He had *Listening Sessions* in each of the six deaneries of our diocese. Over one thousand people participated.

As a result of the Synod, the diocese came up with *Ten Priorities*. To fund those priorities, it initiated the *Alive in Christ Capital Campaign* which would take place in all of the ninety plus parishes of our diocese. At this time, about two-thirds of our parishes have conducted the *Alive in Christ Capital Campaign*. **The good news is that 65% of the monies raised will remain in the parish for the needs of the local community.**

Diocesan Goal

The diocesan goal of \$150 million was established *before* the economic downturn. Bishop Wenski did consider postponing the campaign but his advisors supported the launching of the project as planned. At this time, the campaign has raised almost \$100 million—an amazing accomplishment in this economy. Again, remember 65% of that money will remain in our parishes.

Our Parish Goal—\$3.3 million

Each parish has been asked to have as its goal twice one year's offertory. For us, this comes to \$3.3 million. The good news is that to date, we have received in pledges \$1,995,803, which is 60% of our goal. I am most grateful to all who have pledged thus far to our campaign.

Our Parish's Three Priorities

As stated above, the diocese has ten priorities for its portion of the campaign, and each parish has its own priorities. The list of the ten priorities of the diocese will be available next weekend when we hand out packages about the campaign. Each package will contain:

- Campaign brochure
- Pledge slip
- Letters from the bishop and myself

Our parish's three priorities are:

- *Expansion of our ministry building.* In light of the shortage of meeting space in our parish, we are planning to build an extension to our Ministry Center that will accommodate as many as eight more meeting rooms. At this stage, I am working with a group of dedicated parishioners to explore our needs and to plan the needed expansion.
- *Support for our school* is the second priority of our campaign. We have always been very supportive of our parish school. We live in the No.1 school district in Florida. To compete, we must continue to have a topnotch school and be able to make catholic school education a possibility for all families irrespective of their financial situation.
- *Outreach to Spacecoast Center for homeless women with children.* As we thought of our needs, we wanted to also reach out to the less fortunate in our area. We will therefore allocate a portion of the funds raised towards helping a group of dedicated local people transform the former *Resurrection Ranch* into the Spacecoast Center for homeless women with children. To date, several parishioners have been helping with this project, volunteering their time and talent. The Center is located off US 1, just north of the Pineda Causeway.

Five-Year Campaign

The *Alive in Christ Campaign* runs for a *five-year* period. The invitation is for you to think and pray for what you can pledge (payable over five years). If your financial situation does not allow you to begin payments on your pledge until a later time, or even next year, we will be very flexible. Some parishioners have already told me that they cannot participate right now but have pledged to do so later this year.

While a capital campaign is not my favorite thing to do, I realize that it gives us a wonderful opportunity to raise funds that will not only enhance the life of our parish and the wider church we belong to, but also reach out to the needy in our area.

How does the *Alive in Christ Campaign* differ from Catholic Appeal?

Our annual Catholic Appeal is for the operation of the diocese, just as our weekly offertory is for the operation of our parish.

The capital campaign, on the other hand, allows us to respond to needs that our Catholic Appeal and weekly offertory cannot otherwise accomplish. Our diocese is now 43 years old and this is its *first* diocesan-wide capital campaign.

Campaign Sunday—May 1-2, 2010

EARTH DAY

Today, we celebrate Earth Day—hence, if you see me hugging trees, you know why. 😊

When God created our beautiful world, he commanded us to also care for his creation. We may and will differ on what that means locally and globally. Despite our differing views on climate change and many other environmental issues, I would hope ALL of us agree that we have a great responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation. We might ask ourselves what this means for us individually, as a family, and as a parish community.

I tend to be a practical man. So when it comes to any issue, I ask: What does this mean in a practical sense and what, if any, action is asked of me?

The cover story of the April edition of *U.S. Catholic* is entitled *Our Lady of Waste Management—How Parishes Are Cleaning Up the Earth*. It seems many parishes are doing a lot when it comes to this issue. They are happy that Pope Benedict seems to be on board—being dubbed by some as the Green Pope. His World Peace Day Message for 2010 is titled: *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*. I just said that when it comes to any issue, I look for practical suggestions. The following are some such suggestions contained in one of the articles.

- Do a complete building and grounds assessment to find energy-and water-saving potentials.
- Take advantage of the local utility's energy audits and any credits they might provide.
- Take an inventory of cleaning chemicals at the church and school, and switch to green substitutes, where appropriate.
- Ensure compliance with a parish-wide recycling program, including during the summer months.
- Look for ways to improve storm water management and habitat creation.
- Offer pitchers of water instead of bottles at parish meetings and explain why plastic bottles aren't good for the environment.

- Serve fair-trade coffee and tea (in mugs instead of foam cups) after Mass, again with signs explaining why.
- Do a rough calculation of your parish's carbon footprint for ideas on how to reduce it.

(coolcongregations.com)

The following is also quoted from one of the articles in *U.S. Catholic*.

According to Energy Star, a government-based program that labels energy-efficient appliances, if all of the nation's 307,000 congregations cut their energy consumption by 25 to 30 percent, they would save nearly half a trillion dollars and 13.5 billion kilowatt hours of electricity. That's a lot of coal, oil, and gas saved for the future. Best of all, Energy Star says most congregations can cut their energy use simply by investing in efficient equipment, facility upgrades, and maintenance. The choice is whether to pay for wasted energy or for upgrades.

I am interested in being a good steward of God's creation and a good steward of our parish resources. If any of the above practical suggestions would achieve both of these goals, it seems we should be doing them. If you have a calling or passion for this challenge, let me know and let us see if we can do a better job of caring for God's creation and of being a better steward of your money.

A Good Story for Parents with Teenagers

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Jay Cormier writes:

Bobby messed up—big time. Mom and Dad let him take the car Saturday night to take his girlfriend to the movies. Well, things got out of hand. On the way, they picked up a friend and then another friend.... Bobby wasn't paying attention as he should have and ran a red light.... He was stopped by the police.... An open container (not Bobby's) was found in the back seat.... His parents were called. Without a word, Bobby handed over his set of car keys to Mom and Dad—and didn't expect to see them for a long time.

The following Monday, Mom asked Bobby if he could take his grandmother to her doctor's appointment after school. Sure, Bobby said, and Mom gave him the keys. Bobby got Grams to the doctor on time, waited for her, and then took her to the mall to do some errands. They both had a great time. Returning home, Bobby handed the keys back to Mom.

A couple of days later, Mom was delayed at work. She called Bobby and asked him to pick up something for dinner. Sure, he said. He took the keys from his dad's desk drawer and headed downtown. He saw some of his friends from school. They were on their way to the mall asked him to go along. No, he said, he had to take care of some stuff. Bobby picked up dinner and got it home. He helped his

Mom and sister unpack everything and set the table. Then Bobby returned the keys to his dad's desk.

On Saturday, Bobby was in his room when his dad came in. Would Bobby take a run to the nursery and pick up some bags of top soil and mulch? Dad tossed the keys to Bobby and Bobby headed out. He returned an hour later with the material. He then spent the morning helping his dad spread the mulch and plant new shrubs and spring flowers in the yard.

When they both went in for lunch, Bobby handed the keys to his father.

"No," his dad said matter-of-factly, "you hold on to them."

Bobby's Mom and Dad understand that just as they must hold their son accountable for what he had done, they also must give Bobby a chance to restore their trust in him. That's what Jesus does for Peter in today's Gospel. In asking Peter to profess his love three times, Jesus is not taunting Peter but calling Peter to move beyond the past in order to take on the new challenges of apostleship. In forgiving Peter as he does, in effecting reconciliation with Peter, Jesus transforms Peter's regret and shame into a new understanding and conviction of the Gospel the fisherman has witnessed. The Easter Christ calls us to embrace that same model of forgiveness: to possess the greatness of heart to forgive and seek forgiveness; to seek to rebuild and restore trust with those from whom we are estranged, with those we have hurt and who have hurt us, with all who "mess up" - big time.

Reflection Questions

How do you feel about the way the parents dealt with their teenage son? How would you have handled the situation?

Reflection on Failure

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Fr. John Vella writes:

Much of our reading for today puts the spotlight on Peter. It's good to think about Peter because we have so much to learn as we examine his relationship to Jesus. Jesus' reaction to Peter's denial doesn't make sense, does it? Jesus doesn't seem to have been put off by the way Peter treated him. Instead of throwing Peter out of the group of the chosen ones, he gives him a special responsibility in his Church. Jesus did not treat Peter as a failure, but rather as one who had failed. Jesus knew that there was more to Peter than his failures.

But isn't it true that we often deal with our failures as if they told the whole story of our lives. How many times do we catch ourselves saying, "I'm nothing but a failure," when what we really mean is, "I have failed this time." Failures are never to be given the status of being so important that nothing else matters. If we allow failure to take over the most significant position in our minds and hearts, then we have made our failures into our gods. We

then allow ourselves to be controlled by our failures. God's forgiveness and mercy can take care of our failures in the blink of an eye. And what is even more, our failures, far from dragging us down, can even help us to grow in humility and compassion.

The way in which each of us uses our failures is going to be different. We can give the gift of understanding to others because we understand certain types of failure, as it were, from the inside. Yes, we have been there. We have some idea of what others are going through, and because of that, we can listen and support them in a unique way.

The following story appeared in *Action 2000* daily devotional. It fits in very nicely with the above piece.

*Katherine Gordy Levine is a professor at Columbia University. She and her husband have dealt with foster children all their lives. Her book *When Good Kids Do Bad Things* tells how a "good kid," the Dalai Lama, future Tibetan spiritual leader, did a "bad thing." He went into the palace garage, "borrowed" one of his country's four cars, and smashed it into a tree. Today's reading tells how another "good kid" did a "bad thing."*

How do I react when a "good kid" does a "bad thing"? How do I decide how I should react in such a case?

Every parent is at some time the father of the unreturned prodigal, with nothing to do but keep his house open to hope. (John Ciardi)

Have a blessed week,

